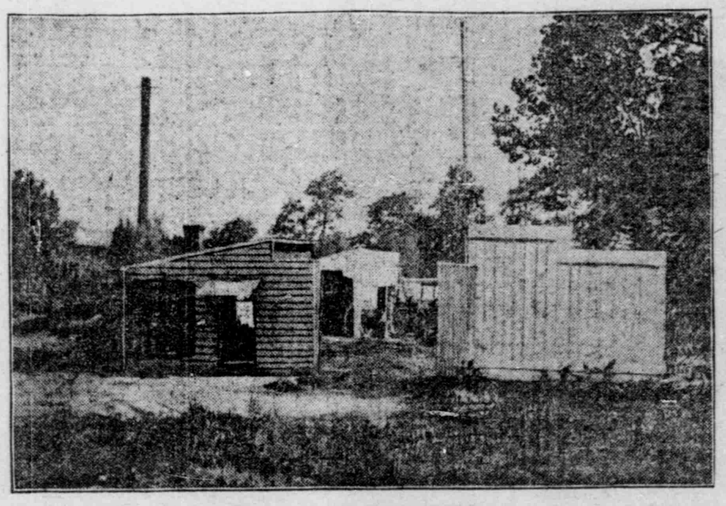
THE FATE OF CONVICT DOGS AT THE WASHINGTON POUND

One Hundred and One Vagrant Curs Executed in a Single Day by Headsman Einstein--Facts and Fancies About Their Deaths

"Wonder What We've Done to Deserve This?"



Entrance to the Canine Bastile.

Colonel Einstein's "Gas Guillotine."

WASHINGTONIANS are informed this morning of a fact of which they may not feel particularly proud, but history is history, and vag dogs must die. This city has broken its own record and the record of the country in the number of lost, strayed, or stolen dogs of all degrees, captured, garroted, or shot to death in a single day.

The poundmaster is puzzled by the plague of the disowned dogs. Man is taking but indifferent care of man's canine friend in Washington. He is dying (the dog) daily by the score, and on Monday last the record was broken, and the chances seem largely in favor of a further shattering this week.

On Monday night there had been in the pound for that day the alarming number of 145 dogs. That broke the record for a total for a single day, and all the executioners went to work on the evening of that day and slew 101 of them, and that broke another record.

The Washington pound is not an elaborate monumental pile, but there is no place like it on the inside for variation of scene, sound, and impression. It stands—perhaps it is better to say it leans—up against one of the murkiest hills of "Foggy Bottom." It is a calcimined structure of pine boards, like a stockade or big stable—a modern instance of the whited sepulcher. In the entourage of the dog pound are many houses of ancient date and fortuitous architecture. A year or two ago before this composite jail and morgue was whitewashed, a Senator's wife made herself very unpopular in that neighborhood by calling at several of the adjacent buildings and asking the landladies, "Is this the dog pound?" Even now it is only after a tour of houses full of holes, dogs, cats, and oleaginous babies, and through a waste of dog fennel, wild strawberries, blackberries, mullen, and pokeberries that you arrive at the most melancholy morgue. Innumerable things of human interest are said to have been enacted there.

Poundmaster Einstein said that the place was full of pathos, but Poundmaster Einstein does not know that pathos is entirely odorless. Mr. Einstein is nevertheless a man of judgment and of feeling. On the table in his office are piles of legal documents which he reads to the accompaniment of the strongest potpourri ever arranged for many voices. The music of this morgue is pitiable. You take it away with you for the ensuing midsummer nightmare. It is not the joyous canticle, or chauson, of sacred animals in a dog show, but the composite dying groans and howls of the predestined criminals—mastiff, bulldog, skye terrier, setter, beagle, and rat catcher.

Sixty-five dogs, apparently of sixty-five different breeds, were howling the crescendo strains of the damned in chorus last Tuesday afternoon, notwithstanding the fact that only on the day before 101 were ruthlessly suffocated at the butchering box. They were not howling for bread or meat or vegetables. They had been amply fed, and so it was plain that their boisterous grief was caused by the consciousness that by night or on the morrow, at the outside, they will have to meet and reckon with Mr. Einstein. It is in vain you speak to one of these prospective victims with a heart full of sepulchral emotion. Blanche, Tray, Sweetheart, Fido, and Fidele are in no humor for persiflage.

"Poor Fido!" said Mr. Einstein to a little red dog with sacrificial blue ribbon around his neck. This little dog was shedding tears and thinking deeply as he peered longingly through the iron grating. "Poor Fido!" repeated Mr. Einstein; but Fido could not be cajoled into taking his watery eyes off the butcher's box. He fell back on his haunches and howled like the vox humana stop on the pipe organ.

"Probably been here before," remarked Mr. Einstein, as he proceeded to speak to a surly looking animal with a black spot around a villainous eye. He was crouching in a corner. Mr. Einstein called him a pet name in a pleasant tone, but the brute simply turned his eye around without moving his head and said very distinctly with that black-ringed eye of his "Oh, you go to h——!" This was the example in the dog world of how a brute can meet his fate.

Then Mr. Einstein spoke to an animal that looked like a Gordon setter. The poor dog crawled up to the bars and wanted to kiss the hands of his executioner. You have read of that kind of people, too.

While all this was going on a poodle, evidently much cared for at home, hair cropped and otherwise well treated, was sleeping. He was aroused. He looked over to the butcher's box and barked joyously. He was prepared to meet his Einstein. This dog reminded one of the type of expert murderer who kills a wife and six children and tells the jailer cheerfully on the morning of the execution that he wants to go at once beyond the clouds and join the choir of which his wife and children are the latest recruits.

Most of these dog martyrs die because their best friends fail to keep them in metallic tags at $2 apiece. The dog catcher scoops them up on the streets in dip nets, and the policemen find the untagged at their homes, or people surrender their pets voluntarily to relieve themselves of being arrested for harboring untaxed dogs. Yesterday four dogs were brought in on the arms of children. There was a grievous parting on both sides in one case. A little boy, scarcely more than six, brought a puppy, big enough, however, to be a burden to the child. They clung to each other until the keeper opened the iron door. The boy pushed his only friend in, not, however, before the only friend had licked him on the cheeks, a genuine puppy's farewell kiss. All the other dogs looked at the newcomer. They probably dubbed him No. 66 and gave him forty-eight hours for prayers. The little dog looked unutterably sad and alone in the world, and then he looked comical when he drew the back of his forefoot across his face, making a dark band of black dog dust, and perspiration.

Mr. Einstein is used to this kind of thing. It does touch him in soft spots, but then there are humors in the Spanish prison of "Foggy Bottom." Not long ago he said a very fashionable woman came in and recognized her pet. When returned to her she was ecstatically wrapping the renegade up in her arms and saying, "Come back to mommer," to the intense amusement of the gentleman who would have put the dog to death within the next hour. Mr. Einstein said it is amusing and altogether lovely at times to hear and see ladies recover one of these convict dogs. "They hug them and kiss them, and call them baby."

And thus it is that a woman's husband can stay out two nights in the week, and may come home by himself, but if mommer's baby stays out one night without a tag, "mommer" will go forth in the carriage to look him up. It is this kind of discrimination that knocks philosophical husbands silly.

On the south wall of this bastile is a box filled with gas. In this the fated dogs are suffocated if people don't come for them, redeem them, or buy them outright for the $2 fine. The executioner takes the dog, after a good dinner, to this box, puts him in, and the gas does the rest. "Next!" and along they come, one at a time, until all the doomed are dead.

Even such a place has its humors. Last August a little brown dog was caught, served forty-eight hours in jail, and was being dragged to the box to die. He got away through a hole in the fence. Later in August he was brought back, and he made another dash en route to the box and again he escaped. A third time he was caught and led out to execution. He dashed for the hole in the fence, but alas! it was closed. He returned slowly to the box, stood up on his hind legs, and voluntarily hopped in.

In ordinary years there are about 4,000 dogs disposed of in this way. This year there may be 5,000.

A REMARKABLE COINCIDENCE

By GEORGE ETHELBERT WALSH

"EVER hear from Wambeck, Letty?"

"Yes, occasionally," Letty answered, coloring in spite of her supreme effort and holding the white sheet of paper behind the folds of her dress.

"I suppose he's making a fortune out West," the first speaker continued, apparently not noticing anything unusual. "He shouldn't stay too long, or we'll all forget him. By the way, what was the important business that took him away? He went very suddenly, didn't he?"

"Yes, but it was—a mine, I believe, which needed his attention. It——"

She broke away to hide her confusion.

"There's Auntie, and I promised to meet her at three," she murmured, somewhat incoherently. "You'll excuse me?"

Without waiting for an answer she hurried across the lawn to an elderly lady whom she greeted affectionately, and then wandered on toward the garden. In a few moments she was half-hidden from view by a clump of lilac bushes. Stealthily withdrawing the letter from her dress, she unfolded its crumpled pages, and with drawn brows read it for the second time.

"Dear Letty," it began in the old familiar handwriting. "You ask me what is keeping me here so long, and I can only answer in the old strain—business, business, business. I suppose I should write the word in capitals. I can read between the lines of your last letter that you are not satisfied with this explanation. I don't blame you, for any man who would sacrifice the comforts and pleasures of New York for this wild mining camp simply for business must be insane. I long for the dear old haunts and places of amusement every day and night. I think the memory of them—and of you—are the only things which keep up my spirits. At nighttime I get very gloomy and downcast. I'm homesick—terribly homesick—and I'm harrowed at times by a fear that I might never get back again. That, I suppose, is all foolishness. But it takes hold of me at times so that I can't cast it off. It is like a horrible shadow pursuing me. I dream of it at night, and shudder at the thought of it in the daytime. I wonder if you would care so much if I never did return. Suppose something should come up to keep me away from you forever! Would you soon forget and forgive?

"I have thought of this lately because of a strange experience with a man whom I have learned to like—and even to love. He drifted to this mining camp by chance, and a similarity of tastes and dispositions brought us into intimate relationship. He has been unfortunate—a most unfortunate outcast—and I pity him with all my heart. His story cannot be told within the space of a few pages. But briefly it is something like this:

"When a young man he committed a crime—I will not enter into the details of it—but it was a crime which caused his arrest and imprisonment. He was sentenced to serve a term in prison. He was not bad at heart or inclination; he had simply yielded to an overpowering temptation and had fallen. In the silent prison days he repented and determined to live an upright life when he was released. He would change his name, and reform.

"All this seemed simple and easy enough in imagination while in prison; but outside of the walls he found his pathway hard and rugged. The taint of the prison clung to him, and from one position to another he was forced through the accidental discovery of his convict days. Almost discouraged he finally saved enough money to enter business for himself in a small way in New York. There he succeeded, and the past seemed to be buried and forgotten at last. He prospered, and in time fell in love with an estimable young woman, who returned his affection. They became engaged, and life for once seemed to flow smoothly without the proverbial ill-luck. The only thing to mar his happiness was the remembrance of the past. He did not feel it his duty to inform his sweetheart of his past crime and imprisonment, for it might separate them for good. His conscience worried him at times, but he determined to live it down and let the past bury the past.

"Then one day came the unfortunate incident which makes this story so heartrending to me. A friend of his fiancee was a relative of a captain at detective headquarters, and he invited them to visit the police department's offices under his guidance. They accepted the invitation, and together they went and examined the different relics of famous criminals who had figured in crimes long since forgotten. They were nearly ready to leave the building when some one suggested that they visit the rogues' gallery. The hundreds of photographs of well-known and lesser-known rogues were cursorily examined. They passed on from one to another. But suddenly they stood transfixed before No. 2,001—a small, inconspicuous photograph of a young man. A deathlike silence fell on the company. My friend turned white, and his arm trembled with agitation, and not one of the company dared look at him. He could have denied it, and they would have believed him. But he was too honest for that. In cold, hard tones he related all, telling them that he had been a criminal, and that the photograph was that of himself. Then, as his fiancee shrank back from him, he turned, and hurried from the building.

"He came West, and drifted from one mining camp to another. He is here now in despair. I dare not leave him. He is hopeless, and desperate. He clings to me, and if I should leave him he would commit suicide. I have been trying to induce him to write to his fiancee, but he will not. No woman could forgive a man for being a criminal, and much less for winning her love under those false conditions. I have used all my influence to persuade him differently. But he is relentless, and I am in despair myself. What would you do? You are a woman, and can answer this question better than I. Should he return to his fiancee and ask her forgiveness? How would she receive him?"

The letter closed abruptly, and when Letty dropped it into her lap tears stood in her eyes. She was unsatisfied. There had been no reference to their own love, and she was hungering to know more of it. It was as if another had come between them to widen the gulf which time and distance had already effected. But then the unfortunate man who had so strongly appealed to her lover's sympathy should have her support also. Within a short time she was ready to post her reply, expressing her feelings somewhat strongly in these terms:

"I do not see how you could doubt for an instant a woman's point of view on such a question—especially mine. Any woman with a heart and soul would be only too glad to receive back a lover under such circumstances. Has not his whole subsequent life atoned for his early sin? If the woman he was engaged to rejected him for that early crime, she is not worthy of him. Men are harder and less forgiving than women, and sometimes they think of us through their own prejudiced and distorted views of right and wrong. I should like to see this man. I know I should like him. If he will not go back to his fiancee let me hunt her up in New York, and I will send her to him. I think I have the powers of persuasion to do this—if she is worthy of him."

When a week later another letter was received from Wambeck it contained less news of his reformed friend, and more about himself; but in a postscript it said:

"I am not making much progress with my poor friend. He is as downcast and morbid as ever. It worries me night and day. I showed him your letter, and he was more than grateful to you; but he cannot get up the courage to write or go to New York. I am almost in despair for him. I feel that my fate is wrapped up in his, and that I cannot return until he does.

"Then, Letty, dear, you would receive back a criminal who had reformed and accept him as your lover? Are you sure of that? Do you know what it all means? Now answer that question honestly, and consider it well beforehand. If some day the test should be put to you would you shrink from it? Most women would, I think. Don't you?"

This questioning of her love and faith nettled Letty. She put down the letter with a little indignation mantling her brows.

"He has no right," she murmured. "But then men are all skeptics. They don't believe until a thing is proved to them."

A little malicious light entered her eyes. She took down pen and paper, and wrote with extreme brevity her first love letter on half a sheet of note paper.

"Yes, dear, I would receive you back, if you were the criminal and not your friend. As for other women, I cannot speak. One should be sufficient for any man."

That afternoon Letty grew restless. It had been four months since Wambeck left her side to go West on an emergency call to settle some mining property left him by a deceased uncle. His hurried departure had left little time for explanations, and his letters ever since had been too vague and uncertain to please Letty.

Lately her friends had remarked on the absence of her lover, and his queer mission West. Under these constant queries and innuendoes, Letty felt her anger piqued to the point of breaking. She brooded over the matter until suddenly a new resolve entered her mind.

When Judge Strong returned home that afternoon, he was confronted by his pretty daughter with the remark:

"Father, I want to visit police detective headquarters tomorrow. Will you get a permit, if one is required, and a guide?"

"What now? What now?" exclaimed the judge. "Studying practical criminology? Writing a book, I suppose, to disprove Lombroso's conclusions!"

Letty smiled indifferently. She was not interested in Lombroso or his conclusions; but she was anxious to study the photograph of No. 2001 in the Rogues' Gallery. What it would reveal to her she did not know, nor did she have any definite suspicion. There was only a strong desire to see what manner of man it was who had weaned her lover's sympathies and desires from her to the extent of filling his letters with descriptions of his sorrow and despair.

The long gallery of photographs of criminals furnished visible evidence of the depravity of the submerged tenth, and Letty passed shudderingly from one to another, noting their numbers rather than the expressions of their faces, which in many instances were ludicrously or horribly distorted to deceive the beholder. There was something gruesome about the photographs which seized upon Letty with a horrible grip, and made her faint and weak; but she steadied herself with an effort until her guide halted before the picture of a famous criminal.

"This," he was saying, "is the photograph of Charley W——, the famous bank robber. He is marked here No. 1999, and every detective in the land knows that number. His record is one of the worst we have here in the gallery."

Letty hardly heard the thrilling recital of the life of the bank robber; but she was thankful for it. It gave her time to think and compose herself. Next but one to 1999 was 2001. She was gazing waveringly into the eyes of the photograph, and they seemed to stare back at her with strange, uncanny power.

For some moments she weakened, closing her eyes in a faint that surged over her. In one instant she saw many things adjusting themselves in her life. The perspective of the past was clearer and plainer. The face before her was younger and less formed than that of her lover; but the eyes and expression were the same. There was an unaccountable weakness about the mouth and chin which she had never noticed before. That had probably gone with the change in his life; it had disappeared with the temptation of sin. He had conquered the weakness of his nature and the visible mark of it had been kindly obliterated by time.

Letty slowly recovered her composure, and she stood fascinated by the photograph, scarcely heeding or hearing her guide. He thought she was gazing at the famous bank robber's photograph, and mentally he thought of the strange fascination the worst criminals often possessed for the loveliest and most cultured of women. It was a paradox he could not explain.

"Shall we move on?" he asked finally.

Letty roused herself as from a dream, and answered: "Yes."

She lingered, wishing to ask him of 2001; but a power she could not control held her mute.

Outside in the fresh air she breathed easier, and murmured: "I see it all now. Poor Winston! he could not trust me. He thought I would——"

There was a telegraph office across the avenue. With a sudden new resolve she entered it, and hastily scribbled out a telegram. Letter post would be too slow; nothing but electricity could keep pace with her thoughts and emotions.

"Come home at once, or I shall come to you. I have seen the photograph of 2001 in the gallery. LETTY."

Judge Strong asked her about her strange visit to the rogues' gallery; and Letty talked rapturously about No. 1999, rehearsing the details of the life of the bank robber, much to her own great surprise. The story had not appealed to her, and she wondered at her subconscious memory.

"Some day you will turn criminal reformer," the old judge laughed at the conclusion of the story.

"And why not?" Letty asked.

The judge looked curiously at her to see if she was in earnest; then shrugged his shoulders, and said kindly:

"Not too fast, little girl. Reforming criminals is all right, but it is better left to older people. That pretty face of yours, now, might," he stopped and smiled, "might turn even a criminal's head, and I am not sure that I want you to marry one yet, even to save him."

Letty had turned suddenly pale.

"But if he had reformed?" she asked, "would that make a difference?"

The judge shook his head.

"Don't talk of it. Winston Wambeck would disown you if you suggested such a thing."

"Nevertheless, if I loved him I'd marry him," was Letty's parting shot.

"Tut! Tut! I'm glad you're not in love with me."

It was a pale, careworn little face that watched the arrival of a cab two days later as it drew up in front of the house. Letty was sure of his coming; she did not doubt once that he would fall her. She had forgiven him all, and was ready to forget the past.

With tremulous heart she faltered when his step sounded on the stairs; then she had no fear or dread. His face was beaming with love and anxiety. He inclosed her in his arms, and the strength of his personality possessed her. She was content to weep and listen. She did not care to speak or think. It was all a dream—a vision of some other world. She heard his voice—quiet, restful, vibrant.

"And you thought it was I, Letty, dear," he was saying softly. "I don't wonder—he looked like me—we were twin brothers, and before the—the—crime, John was exactly like me in looks. At the trial I was often mistaken for him."

She raised her eyes as if uncertain whether to believe her ears.

"But now, thank God, poor brother John will have some peace aand happiness," he continued, not noticing the light in the brown eyes. "His fiancee was true to him; she hunted him up, and has taken him home. She is worthy of him, and they are happy."

She gave a little cry of happiness. Winston Wambeck looked down admiringly into her face as he added:

"And you thought I was the reformed criminal, Letty, and you were ready to come to me if I didn't come to you? I know now the depth of your love. Come, shall we make a clean breast of it, and tell the judge?"

Letty's eyes shone brightly. "Yes, because I told him I'd marry a reformed criminal if I loved him—and I thought I did them."—New York Times.

KNEW WITHOUT GUESSING.

Vera Smartsette—What flowers do you think I love the most? Now, guess.
Jack Harduppe—Oh! I know; the most expensive ones.

SHOCKING.

"Is your husband as enthusiastic about his automobile as ever?"
"No; he swears horribly now every time he has to fill the gasolene tank."